cases imperceptible. The impetus which ruined the Jewish economic and social balance came from without.

As the Middle Ages advanced, the Church had begun to set its face sternly against the lending of money at interest, on the ground that this was prohibited not only by the Old Testament (Deuteronomy xxiii. 19), but also by the Sermon on the Mount (Luke vi. 35, in its current mistranslation), and by nature itself, which did not make money breed by the ordinary processes of reproduction.

The prohibition was an impracticable one (as was soon discovered) : for in a money-economy any man may be reduced to momentary necessity, and thus have urgent need of a loan in order to carry on his business, to prepare for the harvest, sometimes even to live.

The situation would have been an impossible one but for the presence of the Jew, who, just as he found himself excluded from other manners of making a livelihood, was forced into this most unhonoured of professions. The non-Jewish capitalists lent to kings and magnates, under the cover of various devices (such as making out the bond for a larger amount than the sum lent, or euphemistically calling the interest by some other name); but the more open, least lucrative, and most unpopular branches of the profession—such as lending on pledge for a short period to the artisan and tradesman—were forced upon the Jew. Thus (to take only one example) in the heroic days of Florence, when a great part of the city ultimately depended for its livelihood upon large-scale financial

operations abroad, the Jews were summoned to the city for the purpose of administering to the requirements of the populace, to save Christians from being contaminated by the sin of usury |[1]

[1] For a fuller and consecutive account of the subject treated of in this chapter, reference may be made to the present author's *Short History of the Jewish People,* London, 1936. See also below, Chapter X.